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PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY Mr. William E. Colby in CIA Auditorium on 12 September 1975

Mr. Colby: I asked you all to come out here today to try to clarify a little bit what the discussion this morning was all about. The first and I think most important aspect is that it is not a dispute between the executive branch and the Congress over the Congress' access to information. All the information concerned has been made available to this committee by this agency and by the other agencies. What it really is all about is whether that material, which is highly classified, will be released publicly, and to the other nations that are most interested in it, by the action of a subcommittee of the Congress in a matter of an afternoon, and by a vote of that subcommittee without consultation and discussion with the originators of that kind of material. The material in question does include some material that in my view would reveal the intelligence sources and methods; and there is a specific statute that calls upon me to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure. The particular kind of material we are talking about also happens to be communications intelligence, and there is a specific statute referring to that and giving that kind of intelligence specific, extra protection beyond what other statutes do for other kinds of classified information and even for other kinds of intelligence sources and methods. Therefore, the question is not whether we will provide this information.

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We have provided it. The question is not whether it cannot be made public in some form or another, because over the years we have worked with the other committees of the Congress on many occasions in seeking a particular way of phrasing or paraphrasing or sanitizing in some fashion the documents that they have so that they can be publicly released. I think you'll find that in both my own testimony at various times and in other documents given to the Congress and published by the Congress. You'll also find it, I might add, in a number of subjects that are covered that stem from the most sensitive and highly classified sources. I refer, for example, to the fact that most sophisticated Americans who study Soviet weapons systems know that there is a new generation that is in the process of deployment after considerable experimentation. Most Americans know, on an unclassified basis, the characteristics of those weapons systems, the fact that they have MIRVS, and various aspects of them; and this material comes from the most highly classified and sensitive of sources. But it has been separated from the source indications so that it does not pinpoint the way in which this information was gathered. Therefore, we have in this question here whether we are going to apply the statutory requirement that I do protect intelligence sources and methods and whether we are going to give

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extra protection to this particular kind of intelligence sources and methods. We are certainly prepared to negotiate, discuss, and work out solutions to the very real problems we know that this presents to the Congress in wanting to report to the people; and we are sympathetic with that problem and are sure we could do so. But we can't do so if there is an assertion of a unilateral ability of a subcommittee chairman to do this without consultation and without an effort to develop a way in which it can be made public without injuring our sources. With that, I'd be glad to listen to questions.

Speaker: Mr. Colby, the Committee's rules seem to indicate, and I think the Chairman cited today, that the Committee has the power to release whatever information the Committee determines. Do you challenge the legality of that Committee rule or . . .

Mr. Colby: This problem came up in the earlier stages of this relationship, particularly with these investigative committees, and we determined that it is easy to avoid coming to the ultimate question there. Good faith on both sides can be worked through and a solution arrived at that is satisfactory to the other committees and yet does protect the particular sources. And I think that kind of negotiation--discussion, consultation--would have resulted in a solution to this problem.

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Speaker: Mr. Colby, you've said in the past that some of the things that have been examples of wrongdoing by the CIA were aberrations, that you should be judged on what the Agency does. Are you at all embarrassed by the revelation that the Agency was so wrong in the Mideast in 73?

Mr. Colby: No, it isn't a revelation. I've referred to it in public many times myself that our estimates were wrong about that war. Many of the journalists here probably have heard me say that. In various speeches I've referred to it. And so, the fact is that we are wrong sometimes. This building is not a crystal ball. It's an attempt to work out the facts and understanding of foreign situations so that our Government can approach those situations on a basis of knowledge and better understanding. Now, in the course we obviously try to point ahead and see what is likely to develop in the future; and we aren't always right. This was the purpose of the post-mortum, which is the subject of discussion today, which was to examine the way we do these things, to find any weaknesses in them, and improve our performance. And we have made a number of changes in order to improve our performance.

Speaker: Chairman Pike suggested this morning that what had happened is that he had simply hit a sensitive nerve, that he was about to demonstrate that the Intelligence Community isn't worth the expense. Were you concerned about that? Do you think that's an accurate statement?

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Mr. Colby: No. I've indicated that I really have looked forward to these investigations as a way of clarifying to the American people the real nature of modern intelligence and to get us away from some of the old myths about it. And I'm convinced that a full, fair, responsible investigation will show that our intelligence is the best in the world; and, yes, that it is costly, but that it's important to America and is very valuable to America.

Speaker: Mr. Colby, just so we can be sure . . . (Interruption)

2nd Speaker: Chairman Pike was having a discussion with Mr. Rogovin yesterday about why sources and methods would be revealed in six paragraphs of conclusions from the analyst's statement, and he said that, to him anyway, the average man couldn't see where--pardon me, the average person couldn't see where any sources or methods were revealed by the text of those paragraphs. Could you explain to us as a professional intelligence officer some of the reasons you feel sources and methods were disclosed in those six paragraphs yesterday?

Mr. Colby: Surely. Only in the ones that were deleted and certain aspects that were included, a very few items that were included, does this apply. The fact is that . . . (Interruption)

Speaker: Mr. Rogovin objected at first to the release of any of those paragraphs.

Mr. Colby: We didn't think that they were totally relevant in that degree. We did release it after some discussion, and the

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overall conclusion was released at the outset. The overall conclusion about the failure and the way in which it happened was released.

Speaker: There was nothing about the sources and methods in the release of conclusions--in the release of all the four words.

Mr. Colby: Of all but the four words and the other items that are still deleted.

Speaker: There's nothing about sources and methods in what we have now.

Mr. Colby: That's right.

Speaker: Except for the four words.

Mr. Colby: Except for the four words, and I'm not going to pinpoint those four words.

Speaker: Well, can you pinpoint why they were being . . .

Mr. Colby: The reason I do not want to pinpoint the four words and the reason it is important is that they do reveal intelligence sources and methods, and average men and women don't study these things. Very expert analysts go over it. They go back to the date on which the event took place. They look at the practices that they were going through at that time to see what the basis for the statement in that particular phrase might have been. They examine their own machinery to see if there are chinks in the armor and whether there are gaps in their ability to keep secrets that they want to keep secret.

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Speaker: But aren't experts now going through this and aren't they going to spot those four words? And then, why not the rest of us?

Mr. Colby: They may well, but I don't want to help them. And some of their experts may not be as good as some of the others.

Speaker: You've already said that it deals with communications intelligence and it seems a fairly good guess to speculate that the four words you are talking about are "and greater communications security," which indicates that whatever security the Egyptians had we had the ability to penetrate.

Mr. Colby: Well, I'm not going to discuss the specifics of the four words. I am referring to the fact that we do have to examine very carefully whether a particular revelation of certain material would indicate the source. This is the same problem that you ladies and gentlemen of the press have in the way you write certain things in order to protect your sources; that if you write a thing in a certain fashion it will reveal the source, and if you write it in another fashion it won't reveal the source.

Speaker: Why did you have Mr. Rogovin object to the release of the whole paragraph at first, when he first spoke yesterday?

Mr. Colby: When we first talked about this, the question was "Can we release enough of this so that the conclusions come clear--so that the basic thrust of the message comes clear?" And the answer was "Yes, we can." The question

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